

# 4 Ways To Set Yourself Up for Virtual Event Success

The key: adopt an intentional, 'virtual-first' strategy



**BRANDLIVE**

# Summary

PART 1

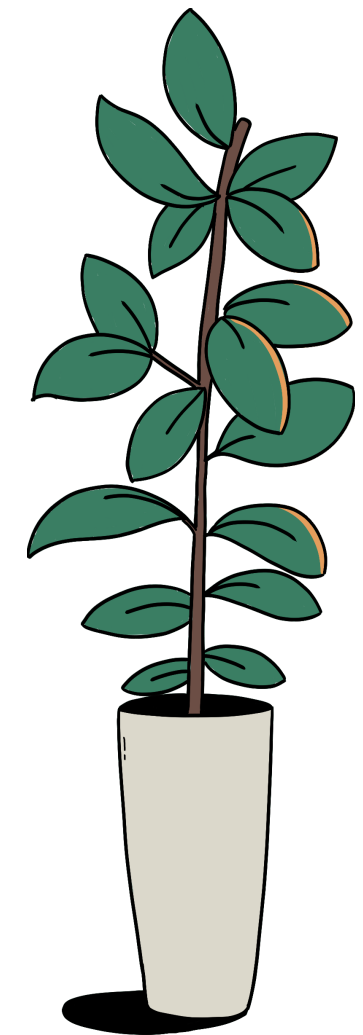
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# Virtual Is Here To Stay

Today, planning for and managing a virtual event is daunting, especially considering the speed at which the industry is changing, as well as the new and ever-evolving software on the market. However, research says that **79% of event professionals expect to host events that include an online component to complement in-person events.**<sup>1</sup> That data indicates there are benefits to virtual that we've just discovered, with the extra motivation 2020 offered. In fact, when virtual experiences are planned thoughtfully, using tools that are a step up from everyday meeting software, Certified Meeting Planners (CMPs) report several unexpected benefits, from stand-alone virtual events to regular town hall meetings for dispersed teams.

Event professionals see the silver lining to virtual events in part because the format has presented the unique opportunity to optimize several facets of in-person events. Fifty percent of CMPs report increased audience reach and lower overheads.<sup>2</sup> Still, others highlight the increased accessibility inherent to virtual events, such as captions, language translation, and American Sign Language (ASL). Event professional Jessica Tate, CMP, DES (Digital Event Strategist), VEIP (Virtual Event Industry Professional), explained, **"There are so many value-adds of having a virtual event. It lives on in an on-demand sense. If I go to all that trouble to get amazing speakers and create great content — why not let it live on?"**

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<sup>1</sup> Splash, December 2020, <https://splashthat.com/resources/2021-outlook>

<sup>2</sup> EventMB, The Virtual Event Tech Guide 2021

It can be used as training and education, it engages audiences for a longer time than just the event itself, and it saves me money in the long run.” Another value-add? Virtual events allow for streamlined data collection, which helps measure the success on a range of indicators and helps make a case for your next event.

Here’s the good news: With the right strategy, some simple planning, and the right partners, you can create engaging, impactful virtual events to connect with your audiences wherever — and whenever — they are. With this guide, we’ll show you that even when you’re not in the same physical space, you can still connect with your audiences in a meaningful way. And if your organization is already using tools to connect virtually, we’ll show you how to do it better. **Building and maintaining a “virtual-first” strategy enhances your ability to communicate your most important messages to your most important audiences.**



How? By communicating to people in the way they consume content. We’ll give you all the guidance you need to develop your own winning virtual strategy that creates a memorable experience, keeps your audience engaged, and gets you ready for your next event.

#### **WHY NOW?**

Virtual is here to stay, so best to be ahead of the game. To illustrate this point, consider the shift from desktop to mobile as it relates to consumer spending. The “mobile-first” transition was predicted by industry professionals for years, based on an analysis of how consumer behavior and demands were evolving. Yet when the majority of consumers became mobile-first, the industry had to catch up, reacting rather than being ready with strategy in hand to meet demand.

So, be ready with your own “virtual-first” strategy.



**“There are so many value-adds of having a virtual event. It lives on in an on-demand sense. If I go to all that trouble to get amazing speakers and create great content — why not let it live on?”**

# Set Virtual Event Goals & Objectives



An intentional virtual strategy starts with planning. This way, you are not simply “adding a streaming component” to your in-person event.

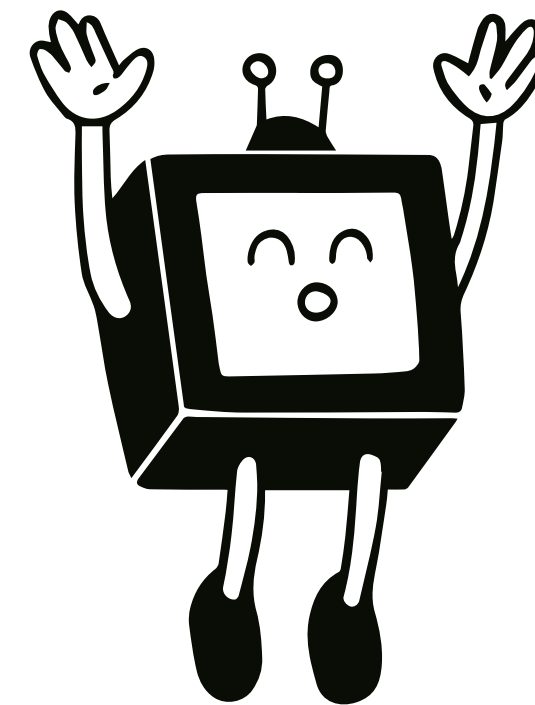
Early on, huddle up with your team to define some clear goals and objectives for the event. Why does this event exist? What must be communicated? What outcomes would you like to see? **One helpful rule of thumb is to set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely).**

Whatever your goals, the metrics you choose say, “This is what success looks like for my virtual event.” File that one away because



the platform you choose may impact how easily you can capture this data. And we’ll discuss the role of event data soon. If you’re a CMP, your objectives may be the number of unique guest registrations, attendance, guest retention, or other KPIs that align with your client’s goals. Or, if your virtual event is a product kickoff or sales training, your goals may align with broader company goals. August 2021 data says that 50% of full-time employees prefer to attend work events online, so best to make sure these experiences are created with the attendees in mind.<sup>3</sup> For example, if your organization’s goal is to sell a certain volume of products by a specific date, the objective for your event might be for 80% of the sales force to attend.

In another scenario, a virtual fundraiser gala may have the goal of raising \$1M. In that case, the event objective might be to reach 5,000 unique guest registrations.



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<sup>3</sup> Edison Research, Brandlive “Future of Work” Study, August 2021

## THOUGHT EXERCISE

- **What does event success look like?**
- **How many people do I want to reach?**
- **If applicable, what are my revenue/fundraising/  
product-click-through goals?**
- **What metrics are important?**  
Registrations? Attendance? Retention? Engagement?

## CREATE A STATEMENT OF GOALS

**[Event title] will [verb] [#] [target audience] for the purpose of [goal] in [insert metric].**

Example (from the Brandlive customer site):

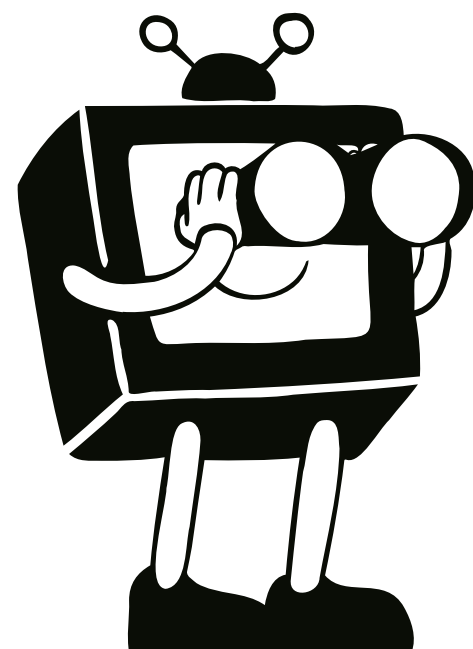
Food & Wine's Classic at Home in Aspen Virtual Event will entertain and raise funds from 7,000 Food & Wine subscribers, readers, and fans for the purpose of presenting several new kitchen products and raising \$30K for the event's nonprofit partners.





# Identify Your Audience

To reach the goals and objectives set for your virtual experience, it's all about the who. Only by thinking audience-first can you create the authentic connection that translates to event success.



You don't just want to make sure you have people at your event; you want the right people. So, think about what catches their attention and holds it. **Knowing your audience will ensure you select the right presenters to deliver your messages effectively**; spokespersons that can best connect with the audience.

Answering questions about your audience is essential to developing your overall event strategy and will help to shape the format, tone, and style of your event, from the stories you tell to the messages you emphasize.

## THOUGHT EXERCISE

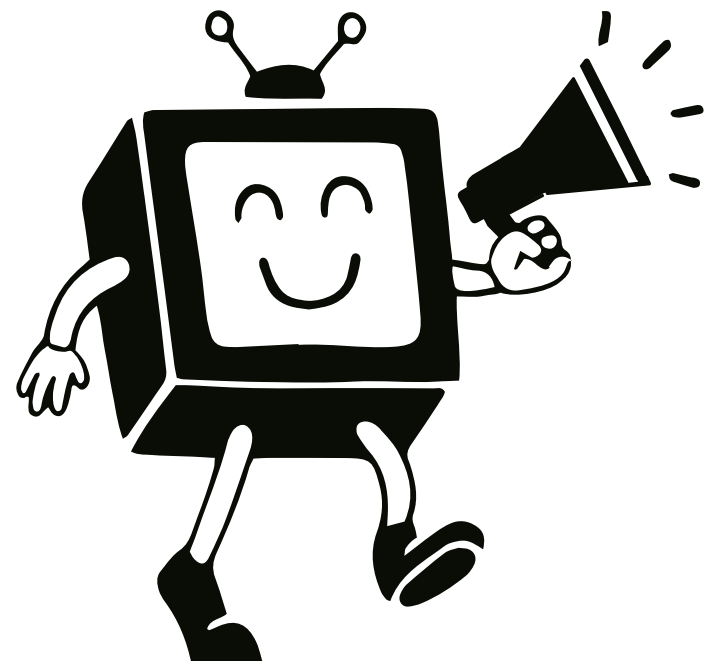
- **Who is my audience?**  
(Age, gender identity, location)
- **What are my audience's interest?**  
(What are their hobbies? What do they watch, read, eat, drink?)
- **What are my audience's goals in attending my virtual event?**  
(What benefit do they receive?)
- **What draws my audience to my brand?**
- **When is my audience most engaged with my brand?**
- **What style of communication most resonates with my audience?**

# Start a Content Brainstorm

Your virtual event will be made up of video content. It may be live, pre-recorded, or a mix.

Video content creation is a process, and it helps to consider and plan ahead for all content that'll be needed. **Identifying your audience will help you get perspective on the types of content that will most resonate with them.**

In order to use this virtual experience to communicate with your audience in the exact way that your audience consumes content, ask yourself the questions on the right.



## THOUGHT EXERCISE

- **How many presenters will be part of this event?**
- **Who are they, and why am I choosing them, specifically?**
- **What types of media will we share with our virtual audience?**  
(Aside from video, will we share slides, downloadable content, something else?)
- **Will we provide content after the event, on-demand?**
- **How much interaction is needed among presenters and guests, and how should the interaction take place?**  
(Chat, live video, breakout groups, etc.)
- **Where will your event be viewed or live streamed?**  
(Live streaming channels include your event page, website, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, to name a few).



# Consider the Data

Although you're in the early stages of planning, now is the time to consider the data you'd like to see post-event. Not only does it help you understand how successful your event was, but certain data provide insights into where you can improve next time around.

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### **Aligning data with your objectives makes sense for gathering post-event insights.**

Some virtual event platforms track data on registration numbers, event attendance, retention, and more.

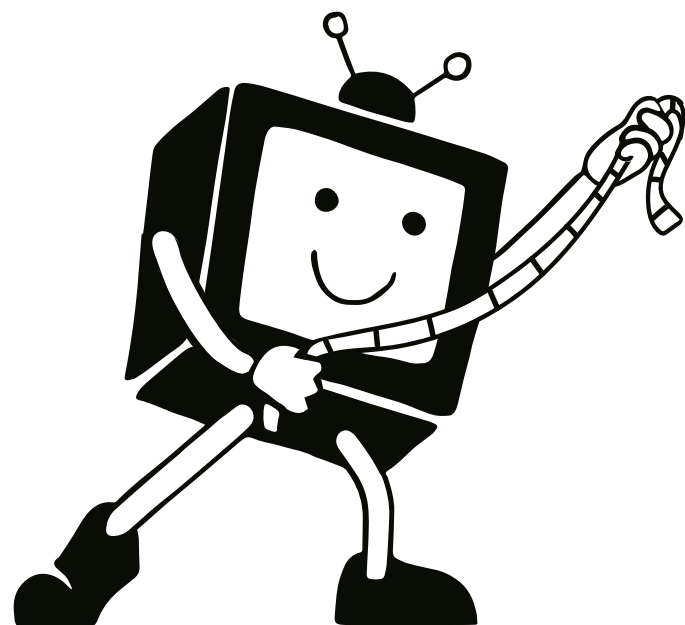
Having integrations with both your CRM and marketing automation platforms will make it easier to capture that precious behavioral data from your virtual event. To learn more about hand-on virtual event production, all

the way through to post-virtual event follow up items, check out [The Six Secrets of Virtual Event Success: from virtual event production to post-event follow-up](#)

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#### THOUGHT EXERCISE

- **How will you get your virtual event data?**
- **When will you get it?**
- **Does your virtual event partner have the ability to integrate virtual event data easily into your CRM?**



# About Brandlive

Brandlive provides video solutions for companies and brands to bring the magic of television to their most important moments and events. Brandlive works with some of the most high-profile brands and organizations in the world to produce visually stunning events. In March, Brandlive took the number one spot on Fast Company magazine's list of the 10 Most Innovative Live Events Companies of 2021 for its Greenroom platform and its prominent role in the digital strategy of President Biden's election campaign. With over 200 employees, Brandlive is headquartered in Portland, OR, and can be found online at [www.brandlive.com](http://www.brandlive.com). Follow us @brandlive on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook.

**Contact us at [info@brandlive.com](mailto:info@brandlive.com)**

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